

A COLLECTION OF
STORIES
FROM
WEST AFRICA

Compiled and Illustrated by
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**HOW CAT LOST
HIS LONG NOSE**



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By Spark Team



HOW CAT LOST HIS LONG NOSE

Note to the reader. Words and phrases typical of West Africa are retained and indicated by italics.

Cat used to be a very handsome animal with a beautiful long nose, somewhat like some dogs or foxes. Whenever Cat walked down the road all the lady animals would watch him, hoping that he would pay some attention to them, but Cat rarely looked at any of the ladies.

One day Miss Rat came to visit her Uncle Squirrel. Now Miss Rat was a very nice looking lady with soft smooth fur and bright eyes. Cat saw her sitting on Squirrel's piazza. Cat greeted Miss Rat and then passed on, but he kept on thinking that Miss Rat was indeed a fine looking woman.

Finally Cat went to Squirrel and asked if he would speak to Miss Rat for him about marriage. Squirrel agreed to speak for him and so went to talk to Miss Rat on behalf of Cat.

"Well," said Miss Rat, "Cat is a very pleasant gentleman and very good looking too, except for his long nose. Now, if only his nose were shorter I would agree to marry him. But I could never marry a man with such a long nose."

So Squirrel went back to Cat. "My niece favors marriage to you except for one thing," Squirrel reported. "She says that she will never marry a man with such a long nose. So, *what to do?*"

"Oh!" says Cat, "That is no problem at all. That can easily be remedied. I will be back in a few days."

Now Cat went down the street to the blacksmith. In those days blacksmiths did do some medical things like pulling teeth.

"Hey, Blacksmith," called Cat. "I have a job for you to do."

"Hello, Cat. What kind of work do you have for me to do?"

"Well," says Cat, "Miss Rat says she will not marry me because my nose is too long. I love Miss Rat and really want to marry her. Soooo, I want you to cut off some of my nose."

"Hi-yah!" yelled Blacksmith, "*I be blacksmith. I no be doctor-o.*"

"O come now," begs Cat. "That *doctor business can be long time palaver*. I do not have time for *doctor business*. I want my nose to get short quick quick. So I come to you to *fini the thing one time-o.*"

"But *this thing be too hard-o.*" wailed Blacksmith.

"*It not be hard thing,*" retorted Cat. "*It can be easy too much*. You just cut my nose off and put plaster there. *It no be heavy problem.*"



"Ok," sighed Blacksmith. "You come back in two days and I will try."

So Cat went away for two days.

Now the blacksmith got everything ready. He sharpened all his tools. He made sure that he had plenty of firecoal. And he found some *fine fine plasters*. When Cat came back two days later, Blacksmith was ready.

"Hello Blacksmith," greeted Cat, "I have come to have my nose cut off."

"Yes, Cat, I am ready to cut your nose shorter," replied Blacksmith. "Now just sit down in this fine chair here and lay your head back. I'll just cut off your nose quick quick."

So Cat lay back in the chair and Blacksmith heated up his fire. He heated his tools very hot. Then he grabbed Cat's nose

with his big tongs and cut off his nose. I mean he cut it all off up close to his eyes.

"EEYOWWW," cried cat. "That hurt!"

"Of course it did," replied Blacksmith. But look in this mirror. Your nose is really short."

"Eeee! That is too fine," said Cat.

They put a big plaster on Cat's nose and he went home for a few days so it could heal up really well.

After a few days, when his nose, what little was left of it, was healed up nicely; Cat went back to Squirrel's house to make plans for the wedding feast.

When Miss Rat saw Cat, she was horrified. "Oh, this is terrible. I wouldn't marry a man with a long nose. Never, never, never. But neither will I marry a man with no nose at all! All the girls would laugh at me."

Cat was stunned. "But you promised," he cried. You said you would never marry a man with a long nose, so I had it cut off."

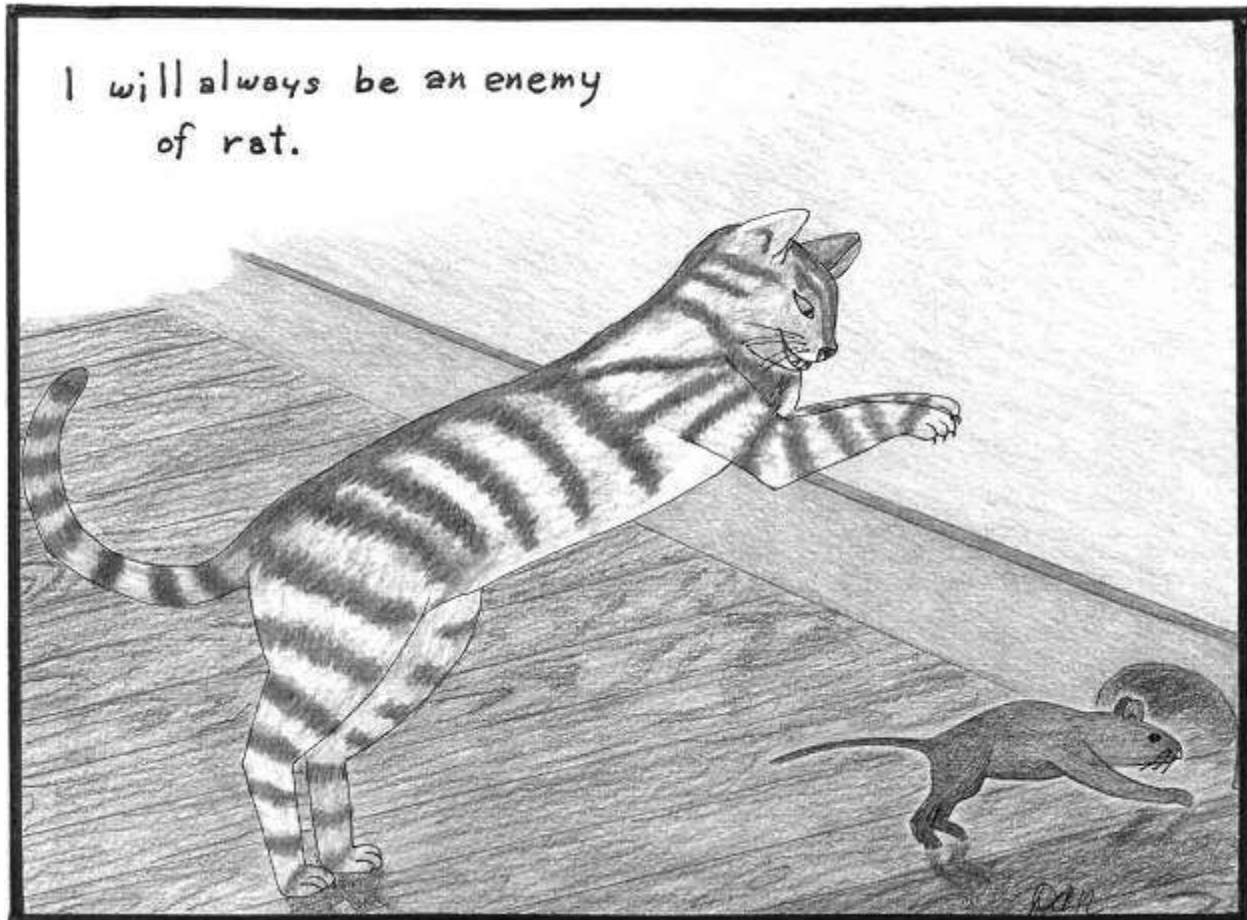
"But you cut it all off," she replied disdainfully. "Now you are absolutely ugly! I can never marry you."

"Oh, *I beg you*," said Cat as he got down on his knee before her.

"No way. Never, never, never," declared Miss Rat.

Now Cat was really *vex too much*. He had gone to all this trouble and pain for his love and here she was rejecting Him. "If you won't marry me," he threatened, "Then I will eat you." And he started to pounce on her.

Miss Rat was *scary too much*. She dived into a hole just before cat could catch her with his sharp claws.



Cat vowed angrily, "Since you *suffer me* too much, I'll never never never forgive you! I will always be an enemy of rat. I will always eat rat."

So, to this day all cats have very short noses and all cats chase and eat rats.

What was Cat's problem? He wanted to please others didn't he. He was thinking about how he looked instead of what kind of a person he was. Here is what the Bible says about what Cat did?

"... A man looks at the outside of a person, but the Lord looks at the heart" (I Samuel 16:7).

"Do not make any cuts on your body ... I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:28).

We should always be happy with the way God made us and not try to change ourselves into what other people think we should be.

People will tell us that we should dress like they do, look like they do, walk like they do, go where they go. We should seek to be what God wants us to be. May people see in us not just the outward appearance but the fruit of God's Spirit - Jesus Himself.

Galatians 5:22,23a tells us, "But the fruit that comes from having the Holy Spirit in our lives is: love, joy, peace, not giving up, being kind, being good, having faith, being gentle and being the boss over our own desires ..."

These things should fill up our lives and flow out into the lives of those around us. They will make us truly beautiful as God sees beauty. What happens inside us will show on the outside.

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